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ABSTRACT

Great Britain's 1988 Education Reform Act demonstrates the prevailing political climate's commitment to market forces and competition as a means of increasing educational productivity. This paper presents findings of the Primary Assessment Curriculum and Experience (PACE) project, which investigated the effects of the policy change on English primary schools. The longitudinal analysis of 54 children as they moved through 9 schools (from 1989/90 to 1995/96) entailed classroom observations, teacher and pupil interviews, teacher questionnaires, and headteacher interviews. The paper considers the broad impact of change in terms of the themes of values, understanding, and power and presents an analytical framework concerning dimensions of change. Preliminary findings reveal several contradictory findings--change and resistance, commitment and demoralization, and decreased autonomy and professional development. Unfortunately, the introduction of the National Curriculum was seriously compromised because it alienated many professionally committed teachers. The reforms introduced constraint and regulation into almost every area of teachers' work. An ironic outcome has been the development of collegiality in many schools as they defend the quality of their educational service against government policies. Four figures are included. (LMI)

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Title: **CHANGING ENGLISH PRIMARY SCHOOLS? A CAUTIONARY ANALYSIS**

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Changing English Primary Schools? A Cautionary Analysis

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1 Introduction

When future historians seek to identify the English educational landmarks of the 20th century, there can be little doubt that they will readily agree on the 1988 Education Reform Act as one of the most significant. It is likely to take its place alongside such educational milestones as the creation of Local Education Authorities in 1902, the provision for universal secondary education under the Butler Act of 1944 and the institution of a policy of comprehensive secondary provision following Circular 7/63. What makes these particular pieces of legislation worthy of being regarded as landmarks in the educational landscape is their enduring influence on the shape and quality of educational provision in the years that followed.

The 1988 Education Reform Act was a classic manifestation of the prevailing political climate in its explicit commitment to market forces and competition as a means of increasing educational productivity. These were decentralising tendencies, as school was set against school in competition for pupils and as the planning and servicing roles of local education authorities were reduced. And yet, the 1988 Education Reform Act also introduced a highly centralised National Curriculum, with associated assessment procedures. Curriculum and assessment requirements were imposed on schools and were intended to provide a structure through which educational 'standards' could be raised, the effectiveness of schools measured and accountability assured.

In place of the broad consensus concerning education which had characterised the post-war decades, both the spirit of the changes provided for in the 1988 Act and the heavy handed character of their implementation led inevitably to open hostility between Government and educational professionals - a pattern which was mirrored in other countries, most notably New Zealand, where Government sought to impose a market ideology on the educational system.

It is in this turbulent climate of conflicting perspectives and desires, prejudice and assumption that the research on which this paper is based found its rationale. In the wake of the changes that the 1988 Education Reform Act had set in motion, there was an urgent need for dispassionate enquiry into the process, the progress and the effects of change. For Government there ought to be a pressing desire to learn in detail how the actual realisation of its policies compares to their avowed purpose. For teachers and other education professionals there is the need to take stock, to interrogate evidence on which to base future judgements about support, adaptation or opposition to change. Ultimately, all such decisions should depend on the effect on pupils themselves - their experience of schooling, their enthusiasm for learning and above all, the level and range of their achievements. As if this were not in itself already a big enough research agenda, for researchers such as ourselves was added the more general desire to understand how educational change takes place.

It was with all these ends in view that the Primary Assessment Curriculum and Experience (PACE) project was set up in late 1989. It has been funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. We chose to study primary schools, partly to build on existing expertise and research data that members of the team already possessed; and partly because it was in Key Stage One, the infant school, that the implementation of the National Curriculum and its assessment was scheduled to begin. We wanted to describe and analyse the responses of pupils and teachers in infant schools and departments to the National Curriculum, to collect

views from headteachers and teachers concerning what was being proposed and what they thought its likely impact would be, and to explore the kinds of strategies schools were evolving to manage the changes impacting upon them. In particular, we wanted to discover how classroom life in infant schools might change or develop in terms of teaching method, curriculum emphasis and assessment practices.

This book which derives from the first phase of this project (Pollard et al 1994) is wide-ranging and complex, reflecting the phenomena and period of change which we have studied. In this paper we therefore attempt to summarise the major findings and themes of the book and to highlight some of their implications. To do this we first, in Section 2, provide some brief details about the research design and data gathering methods. In Secton 3, we review some of the salient findings from each chapter of the book in relatively simple, descriptive terms. In Section 4 we consider the broad impact of change in terms of three themes of values, understanding and power, and, in Section 5, we describe an analytical framework concerning 'dimensions of change' which we developed. Finally, in the conclusion, we address the implications of this study.

2 Research design and methods

At the core of the PACE study is a longitudinal study of 54 children as they move through nine schools drawn from across England. The children are among the first pupils who will experience the impact of the National Curriculum and assessment in full. Annual 'classroom studies' have used systematic observation and pupil interviews which are combined with fieldnotes, teacher interviews and classroom documentation to produce a multi-faceted data-set about the experiences, behaviour and perceptions of each target pupil in each of the classrooms through which they pass during their primary schooling.

The longitudinal strategy monitors pupil experience effectively, but, to widen the teacher sample size, it has been complemented by the collection of a number of cross-sectional data-sets from matched samples of teachers. The teacher sample size in each round was 144, drawn from 48 schools across England and the data gathering uses an 'advance questionnaire' to enhance more detailed interviews. We are using this cross-sectional strategy to compare how teacher perspectives or practices have developed over time.

Overall, the project uses nine main elements of data gathering, each with particular purposes. There have also been several meetings of a 'federated network' of related research projects.

The scheduling of this longitudinal and cross-sectional data-gathering is set out in Figure 1, including the projected schedule for PACE 3.

Project phase	PACE 1			PACE 2		PACE 3		
Year of pupil cohort	89/ 90	90/ 91	91/ 92	92/ 93	93/ 94	94/ 95	95/ 96	96/ 97
Reception	TH							
Year 1		C						
Year 2		AQ	C TH AQ					
Year 3				C				
Year 4					TH C			
Year 5						C		
Year 6							H AC	

Key:

C	Classroom study (including systematic observation, fieldnotes, teacher and pupil interviews)
A	Assessment studies (classroom observation, teacher and pupil interviews)
T	Teacher interview (larger sample)
Q	Teacher questionnaire (larger sample)
H	Headteacher interview (larger sample)

Figure 1: Longitudinal and cross-sectional data-gathering in the three planned phases of the PACE project

Regarding the tracking of change over a longer period, it is worth noting that we designed many of our research instruments so that our new, post-Education Reform Act data on classroom practice in primary schools could be related to earlier studies such as the ORACLE research (Galton, Simon and Croll, 1980), the Junior Schools Project (Mortimore et al 1988) and the BRISTAIX project (Broadfoot and Osborn 1993).

3 The salient findings and arguments from the PACE project

This section provides a simple statement of our key findings, based aroung each major chapter in the PACE book (Pollard et al 1994).

Echoes of the Past

The Education Reform Act was not a one-off piece of legislation and it should be understood in terms of the history of English education. We can trace the history of the elementary school tradition and the developmental tradition, each with its own values and assumptions about knowledge and learning. These traditions influenced recent changes and struggles between teachers and the government. Similarly, it is necessary to understand the origins of teacher professionalism and to note that a new form of professionalism had been emerging in the 1980's based around 'practical theorising'. This contributed to, was threatened by and provided a source of mediation and resistance to recent educational changes.

The Educational Reform Act followed a long-running critique of primary education from politicians and the media in England. Educational research and Her Majesty's Inspectors had also identified weaknesses. In particular, though, the Education Reform Act reflected the implications of New Right thinking on the role of markets in improving educational standards.

School Change

The introduction of the National Curriculum was only one of many changes which affected schools and headteachers. There were direct effects on curriculum provision and assessment procedures, but there were also indirect effects on staffing, organisation, teaching methods and management.

As the immediate pressures and concerns on headteachers and classroom teachers grew and began to diverge, there was a growth of managerialism and a movement towards more directive change, although many schools still tried to retain collegial participation. There was a growth of collegiality.

A large number of schools adopted strategies to mediate and incorporate the National Curriculum and assessment into their previous practices, but there were also some shifts to compliance at the expense of previous practices. There was a strong association between directive management and the extent of change from previous practices.

Teachers' perspectives of their professional role

There were fears that the Education Reform Act would deskill teachers and that they would be reduced from being professionals exercising judgement to become classroom technicians. However, teachers, both in 1990, 1992 and 1993, held strong personal value commitments and felt morally accountable to their pupils and colleagues. Their sense of external

accountability had increased considerably since 1985 so that, overall, they felt accountable in many, often conflicting, directions.

Many teachers felt that their role had changed since the Education Reform Act through increased bureaucracy and central direction. The job was felt to be more stressful and spontaneity in work with children decreased. Teachers' sense of fulfilment from their work reduced but they increasingly developed, and valued, collaborative relationships with other colleagues. Relationships with parents continued much as before, though there was concern about the effects of publication of assessment data.

In 1990, half of the teachers in our study were pessimistic about the future of primary education and felt that work and stress levels were unsustainable. In 1992, most teachers felt that constraint would increase and professional autonomy be reduced. Many expected fulfilment to continue to decline. Older teachers were more depressed than younger ones. Teachers in inner-city schools felt the National Curriculum to be particularly inappropriate for their pupils' needs.

Overall, teachers' work intensified, but many teachers were unwilling to give up their expressive commitment to pupils and their 'extended' view of their professional role. New, external models of accountability were accepted but teachers retained their previous, internalised sense of commitment. There were diverse strategic responses. These ranged from compliance, through incorporation, active mediation and resistance to retreatism. During our study, most teachers seemed to favour incorporation, but in 1993 there was a national boycott of standardised assessment requirements which was clearly a strategy of resistance. Very soon after this, the Government instituted a 'review' of the National Curriculum and assessment procedures under Sir Ron Dearing.

Teachers and the curriculum

Teachers initially accepted the National Curriculum in principle, but they were suspicious of the assessment proposals. In 1990 teachers prioritised children's 'happiness' and then basic skills, but this priority was reversed in 1992. The basics continued to be given great emphasis, but music and art suffered and teachers felt their control of the classroom curriculum had tightened as overload became apparent.

Having experienced the National Curriculum implementation, teachers began to feel that it was too much, too soon, that it was constraining and that it did not allow for responses to pupils' particular learning needs.

Classroom observation showed the dominance of the core curriculum, particularly of English and Maths. Foundation subjects were squeezed making the achievement of curriculum breadth difficult. From 1990 to 1991 there was a considerable move away from combining subjects in pupils' classroom tasks towards tasks based on single subjects. Teachers' classroom planning became much more precise and more collegial, with growing awareness of progression, differentiation and coherence. Teachers used a teaching repertoire, particularly with the core subjects with which they were most familiar. There were significant changes in

teachers' curriculum practices - but, although they worked very hard to implement the National Curriculum, teachers had serious reservations about it.

Pupils and the curriculum

Previous studies have shown young pupils' concern with 'what they have to do' rather than with curriculum subjects per se. They often also wish to avoid risk. We found that five, six and seven year old pupils perceived curriculum coverage fairly accurately, though they overestimated the amount of physical education. They preferred to engage in physical education, painting and home corner play but particularly disliked writing, maths and science.

Important pupil criteria for judging curriculum subjects were: ease and success, interest, fun, activity and autonomy. These related to pupil fulfilment in terms of both pupil and teacher sources of power in classrooms.

Pupils found it difficult to understand or explain specific teacher intentions in setting classroom tasks, other than in generalised ways, though this developed a little when the children were in Year 2 (aged 6 to 7).

Teachers and pedagogy

Previous research has shown that, despite commitments to child centred ideas, most teachers have emphasised basic skills and drawn on a mixture of teaching methods. Teachers in our study felt that pupils should have some classroom autonomy within a clear organisational structure. However, they felt that they were increasingly having to direct pupil activities because of the National Curriculum. Most teachers reported that they used 'mixed' teaching methods, but the proportion emphasising more traditional methods, including whole-class teaching, increased from 1990 to 1992. This change, often unwelcome, was attributed to pressure of National Curriculum requirements.

Observation showed that whole class and individual teaching were each used about twice as much as forms of group work. Teachers were very aware of increases in explicitly planned, whole-class teaching. Classroom groups were formed on various criteria, with attainment grouping being used by 80% of teachers to provide differentiation. Teachers used specific teaching strategies to meet the needs of children of different attainments. High and low attaining individuals and low attaining groups received specific attention.

Teacher contact with pupils seemed to be much higher overall than that found in previous research. Teachers directed more of their classroom time to work with low attaining children and children of low socio-metric status. There were considerable differences from class to class, and within classes, in the proportions of time spent in whole-class, group and individual work.

Overall, teacher control tightened and teacher direction of pupil activities increased.

Pupils and pedagogy

Most pupils liked classroom autonomy but were very aware of, and generally accepted, teacher authority and power. There were some indications of older pupils acting more strategically and instrumentally in classrooms. However, pupils generally liked their teachers and pupil/teacher relationships did not worsen over the period of study.

There was great variation in classroom task engagement and 'apparent classroom effectiveness' and these were associated with the proportion of whole class teaching and pedagogic frame. However, there were also indications from pupil perspectives that classrooms deemed `less effective' on these measures were more fun, more interesting and enabled children to construct understanding, rather than have it imposed.

Teacher Assessment

Teachers' views of assessment reflected their existing professional ideologies. Thus teachers tended to favour formative, provisional and implicit assessment, rather than summative forms of explicit and categoric assessment.

National Curriculum assessment procedures were regarded as unrealistic and time-consuming. There were fears that they would adversely affect relationships. Initially, record keeping was reported as having a great influence on changing practices, and as a heavy workload. Forms of assessment were varied, with listening, discussion and marking prominent.

Pupils valued teacher praise and feared 'doing things wrong'. While some pupils understood teacher assessment criteria such as neatness and effort, many others did not. Children were very aware of differential attainments and of the use of teacher praise.

Classroom values such as productivity, behaviour and individualism persist and were reflected as implicit assessment criteria.

Standardised assessment

The 1991 Standard Assessment Tasks consumed a great deal of classroom time and school support was significant in terms of resources, pupil performance and teacher stress. However, the Standard Assessment Tasks constrained and distorted normal classroom practice.

Standard Assessment Tasks were implemented in variable ways, producing different assessment contexts in which children were to demonstrate attainment. Variations related to teacher stimulus, explication and presentation. Pupil anxiety sometimes depressed performance. Assessment criteria were difficult to interpret and teachers interpreted 'levelness' in various ways.

Overall, there were enormous variations, with interpretation relating to pre-existing teacher ideologies and practices. Teachers did not believe that Standard Assessment Tasks justified

the time spent on them and it is doubtful whether data deriving from Standard Assessment Tasks can be regarded as being either valid or reliable.

4 Analytical themes: values, understanding and power

As the introduction to this paper sets out, the goals of the PACE study go well beyond simply describing the changes that are taking place in primary schools following the Education Reform Act. Our aim is also to contribute more generally to collective understanding concerning the nature of education and how to provide for it most effectively. Thus in each of the various aspects of our enquiry we have sought not only to document but also to interpret the nature of these changes and to consider their significance for the future of English primary education.

Three analytic themes emerged as central to our attempt at interpretation and we identified these themes as *values*, *understanding* and *power*. We will use these themes to structure the conclusions which we draw from our study at this point.

Values

Values lie at the heart of all educational decisions. At their most general, these concern the broad commitments which inform educational and social aims and the moral foundations of educational provision.

Such values are fundamental to decisions about curriculum, teaching approaches and the sorts of outcomes which are intended from educational processes. Messages about educational values are either given explicitly in statements of educational aims or are implied by decisions about curriculum, assessment and pedagogy. The feelings and perspectives of teachers and children about their experiences in schools also reflect value positions. Teachers' conceptions about what it is to be a teacher and about the nature of the teaching profession are the cornerstones of their professional ideologies and are inevitably heavily value laden. Children's responses to classroom situations may also be considered in value terms as they begin to absorb the beliefs and commitments of their families, culture and society. Value considerations may thus be used to describe the changing orientations of participants to educational situations and to explain their feelings and perspectives.

In an early chapter of the first PACE book, 'Echoes of the Past', we sketch out the historical background to the debate about the nature of English primary schooling, and the way in which changing social, economic and political movements, trends and struggles have impacted on issues concerning the nature and content of that provision. We describe the long established traditions of elementary schooling in this country which are rooted in the mass state educational provision of the nineteenth century - and fed by concerns over social order and the perceived need for international competitiveness. This tradition emphasises the inculcation of basic skills and a moral order through tight central control of curriculum and assessment arrangements, and hence, of teachers and schools. By contrast, the equally long standing

'developmental' tradition is rooted in the work of major educational philosophers such as Rousseau and Dewey and of influential practitioners such as Maria Montessori and Charlotte Mason. It emphasises the importance of responding to the needs and interests of the individual child and helping them to 'develop' to their full potential. These differences in values have resonances with the analysis of 'education codes' which has been so powerfully advanced by Bernstein (1975, 1990).

Into this long-running debate impacted a new market ideology in education which, as in other parts of state provision, brought with it an emphasis on competition and consumerism. Policies rooted in this philosophy have starkly polarised the values of most teachers against those of Government. However, of all the sectors of the education profession, it is arguably primary teachers who have experienced these tensions the most sharply for they had most thoroughly embraced the implication of the developmental tradition. In addition, the emergent professionalism which had been developing in the 1980s was strongly supportive of collaboration between schools, teachers and pupils as a form of learning and collective development. The contrast in value positions could hardly have been more stark.

Teachers initially supported the National Curriculum because of the entitlement to broad and structured experiences which it offered. In this sense, it embodied egalitarian values. Such values had been reflected in relatively undifferentiated curriculum provision in primary schools. However, the National Curriculum and assessment procedures emphasised the need for curriculum differentiation for pupils of particular attainments. Government and parental concern for academic standards reinforced this, but teachers were nervous about its effects, particularly if it led towards forms of streaming or setting.

Understanding

Understanding is a concept which highlights the representation of what is to count as educationally valid knowledge. Linked to this are assumptions about the nature of teaching and of teachers' roles and about various more specific features of practice such as assessment. Indeed, the issues which are at the heart of this book lie in the contrast between an understanding of education as the inculcation of established knowledge versus its definition as a process of helping learners to construct their own insights and understanding.

Knowledge has traditionally been viewed as an established body of facts which, with associated skills and attitudes, can and should be taught. This view was articulated by the right-wing pressure groups which contributed to the Education Reform Act and was reflected in the subject specification and much of the content of the National Curriculum. An alternative, Piagetian perspective placing emphasis on the ways in which learners construct knowledge from experience, was superseded in the emergent professionalism of the 1980's by a new approach. This approach, influenced by Vygotskian psychologists, informed many curriculum development projects. It drew attention to the importance of experience *and* instruction and to the nature of the social context in which learning takes place and the support which needs to be available from more knowledgeable others. In England, both these theories of learning and of the curriculum were reflected in National Curriculum documents. Indeed their uneasy co-existence was the basis for a good deal of the controversy that

surrounded the generation of the different subject curricula.

The net effect of this was that, whilst English teachers had been gradually evolving one view of knowledge and learning through the 1980s, much of the National Curriculum, and certainly its assessment procedures, required them to act in ways which derive from quite different assumptions. Whilst the former emphasised the teacher's professional skills, judgement and understanding in promoting learning, the latter tended to devalue the professional pedagogic skills of the teacher by implying that the 'delivery' of the curriculum was largely unproblematic. This was well illustrated in the Government's 1993 proposal that non-graduate teachers should be accepted for work with young pupils.

Differing ways of understanding knowledge and learning also have implications for different perspectives on *curriculum organisation* and teaching method. Over the period of the research reported here, considerable pressure was applied to schools to get them to consider introducing more subject specialist teaching, rather than using forms of integrated topic work. This pressure had a strong effect, but was felt to be inappropriate by many teachers. We documented how classroom pedagogy has been changing as new ways of understanding teaching processes and new educational priorities have been put forward.

Understanding of the purpose and capacity of *assessment* also relates to views of knowledge and learning. Government attention in the early 1990s focused on standardised testing in the hope of providing attainment information for parents and for published school league tables. This strategy assumed that it was both possible and desirable to treat assessments as providing reliable categoric evidence. English teachers had a rather different view, and emphasised the ways in which teacher assessment could feed, formatively, into teaching-learning processes. Many embraced this as part of their professional repertoire. Assessment information was treated as provisional evidence, reflecting the continuous learning process. The gap in understanding between teachers and government on this specific issue is very considerable, but it stands as an indicator of a far wider range of differences in perception. This brings us to the issue of power.

Power

Issues of power pervade any consideration of the introduction of educational reform in the early 1990s. Like other major changes, the introduction of the National Curriculum not only involved the direct application of power, but also revealed power relationships which, in other times, had been hidden or so taken-for-granted that little attention had been paid to them.

The most obvious power struggles involved in the introduction of the National Curriculum were those between central government imposing or requesting changes and the educational service (Local Education Authorities, schools, teachers) implementing, mediating or resisting them. The changes introduced in the 1988 legislation were widely interpreted as a shift in the relations of power between central government, local providers of education and the teaching profession. However, as well as demonstrating power over the educational system at governmental and policy making level, the changes associated with the legislation also had implications for the operation of power within schools. Thus there were changes in the

implementation of relationships between governors, heads, teachers and parents. Changes in school practices also affect changes in classroom practices and, as we have seen, the relative power of teachers and pupils to influence classroom events has begun to change as teachers attempt to 'deliver' the National Curriculum.

However, whilst power is typically conceived as a means of **control** and source of constraint, it may also be manifest in more positive ways. Changes may, in principle, also be *empowering* - for instance, if they allow people to work together in more effective pursuit of agreed goals. Unfortunately, there have been few signs of this over the period of our study.

Head teachers in particular faced enormous pressures at the internal/external interface of their schools. They become directly accountable to governors for implementing central policies, but they did not always agree with these nor feel that it was possible to deliver them. Having formally had considerable autonomy in their role, they now felt immensely constrained. In response to this, some head teachers used their power in more managerial ways.

We have also described how classroom teachers were often required to act in ways with which they fundamentally disagreed and considered to be educationally unsound. This was particularly true in relation to the perceived overloading of the curriculum, the pressure for change in pupil-teacher relationships and what was regarded as the inappropriateness of summative assessment procedures.

Teacher responses to this broad but consistent trend varied between compliance, mediation and resistance. Initially, many welcomed the National Curriculum and sought to incorporate it into existing practices. Some drew very constructively on the 'practical theorising' which had underpinned the emergent professionalism of the 1980s. They attempted to maximise positive aspects of change, such as formative assessment, curriculum progression, the use of subject knowledge and whole-school planning. In so doing, they were, in a sense, recreating their source of professional power in 'expertise'. Other teachers simply tried to survive in the context of rapidly imposed and changing requirements. Workloads, stress-levels and demoralisation became very high and teachers began to consider forms of collective action to assert a countervailing power to that of the government. The most telling example of this was, as mentioned earlier, the 1993 resistance over boycott of assessment requirements.

The pressure on head teachers, teachers and pupils was reflected in changes in classroom practices and, in particular, teachers used their power over pupils in that context to tighten classroom organisation and to increase direction of pupil tasks.

There can be no doubt then that, overall, the trends for head teachers, teachers and pupils in terms of power were all in the direction of increased constraint.

5 Dimensions of change

In initially identifying these broad themes of power, values and understanding we have tried to provide an analytic framework which can link the complex mass of specific changes springing from the 1988 Education Reform Act to the enduring issues and concerns surrounding primary

school provision more generally. At a rather greater level of specificity, our three themes are reflected in the fourteen 'dimensions of change' which are summarised in Figure 2.

School organisation and management

school based development - negotiated change - imposed change

compliance - mediation - resistance

top down management - managed participation - collegial management

individualism - collegiality

subject specialists - subject generalists

Teacher professionalism

expressive commitment - instrumentalism - alienation

restricted professionalism - extended professionalism

autonomy - constraint

Teachers' classroom practice and pupil experience

strong classification of curriculum knowledge - weak classification of curriculum knowledge

broad curriculum content - narrow curriculum content

established knowledge - constructed knowledge

strong pedagogic frame - weak pedagogic frame

formative assessment - summative assessment

strong categorisation - weak categorisation

Figure 2: Dimensions of change

These dimensions of change provide for analysis in a number of different ways. First, the dimensions can be used to summarise the characteristics of changes which have taken place; second they provide a means of distilling more general understandings about particular features of English primary education. Finally, the dimensions map on to existing theories and research in education, thus allowing us to articulate middle range analyses within more generalisable frameworks.

The dimensions cluster around three key aspects of educational provision and change: school-level organisation and management, teacher professionalism and teachers' classroom practice and pupil experience.

School change

At the whole-school level, our understanding of the changes required under the Education Reform Act, led us to anticipate that the analytic themes of values, understanding and power would find expression in the different ways in which schools responded to externally imposed change and the nature of the resistance, if any, generated by such impositions. We anticipated that headteachers' different ways of managing change would be particularly important in this respect.

Essentially our data shows that, although most primary schools had participative or collegial approaches to management, there has been a trend towards more directive, top-down management. This is particularly associated with changes away from established school practices in favour of greater adaptation and compliance with new requirements.

Teacher professionalism

Regarding teacher professionalism, we focused on three dimensions: views of knowledge and learning as established or constructed; external constraint and autonomy and commitment to restricted or extended forms of professionalism.

Our overall findings on these dimensions, are represented in Figure 3.

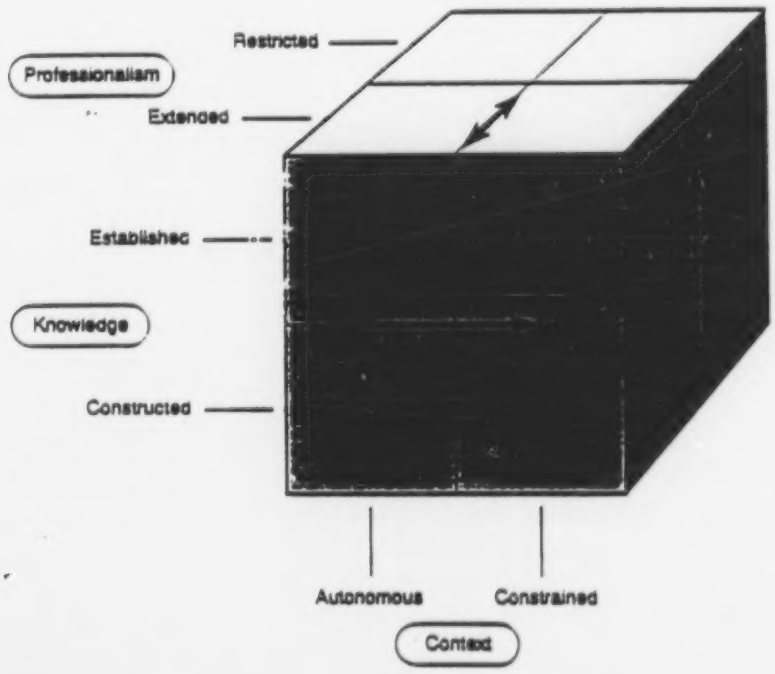

Figure 3: Changing dimensions of teacher professionalism

The bottom left-hand corner of Figure 3 represents the main elements of the professional perspective of English primary teachers before 1988 in its emphasis on a child-centred, constructed curriculum largely under the control of the teacher. However, we also found that teachers feared the erosion of this power to exercise their professional judgement and how they felt that the increase in external constraint was reducing their time and energy to respond to children's individual interests and needs. In consequence of both the stress resulting from a declining sense of professional fulfilment and the absolute increase in workload, teachers were typically concerned about the present and pessimistic about the future. Indeed, our data and analysis show an increase in the development of subject teaching, in conceptions of knowledge as established, and in the influence of external constraint. Teachers were however, very unwilling to give up many aspects of their roles, especially those related to commitment to pupils, which were associated with extended professionalism. This was, in itself, a major cause of their extensive workloads.

Our study has showed that teachers' moral and personal commitments to the education of young children remain strong, despite the pressures on them. This underlines the very high order of expressive commitment which English primary school teachers have to teaching. However, many teachers left the profession if they could, or said they would like to. Some others adopted more instrumental positions and began to minimise their personal and emotional commitment.

Primary school teachers in England have tended to have an extended conception of their role. As we have seen, we found them to be concerned about the children in their class in social, emotional and physical terms, as well as intellectually. They were concerned about parents, the school, its role in the community and about the nature of national education policy.

Many of the teachers in our study had derived a great deal of personal fulfilment from teaching over the years and their value commitment to an extended professional role was a moral one. Commitment to an extended role still existed amongst teachers with a strong sense of professionalism, but demoralisation was leading to some retrenchment.

Some teachers feared that pupils' values, especially their level of commitment to school, might also become more instrumental because of the fragmentation and overload of the National Curriculum, the necessary changes in classroom routines and the categoric labelling of national assessment procedures. We have found little evidence of this so far, although our judgement is that teacher fears are well founded and that the lack of evidence is in fact, in major part, a measure of their commitment and expertise in pre-empting such developments.

Is it thus our conclusion that schools are being forced to revert to the elementary school tradition with its emphasis on established knowledge, external constraint and a restricted professional role as the various facets of the developmental tradition come under attack? Our evidence suggests a more complex answer, for, whilst many teachers may be forced to adopt new practices, this, in itself, will not necessarily change their values. Indeed, it seems to be the case that the exercise of coercive power has challenged some teachers to explore their professional repertoire in order to find ways in which they can mediate the new requirements or incorporate them into their existing practices. They have thus sought to ensure that these new practices support, rather than undermine, their long standing professional commitments.

What we may see therefore, is the development of more targeted and sophisticated curriculum planning, assessment practices and pedagogy. This would be the outcome of a *professional* response to the more barren, technicist requirements of the act.

Classroom change and pupil experience

The argument concerning the essentially professional nature of teachers' responses to the Act's requirements is born out by our findings concerning the impact of recent educational changes on classroom practices and thus on pupils. Figure 4 provides a visual summary of the trend of changes in classroom practices which we found.

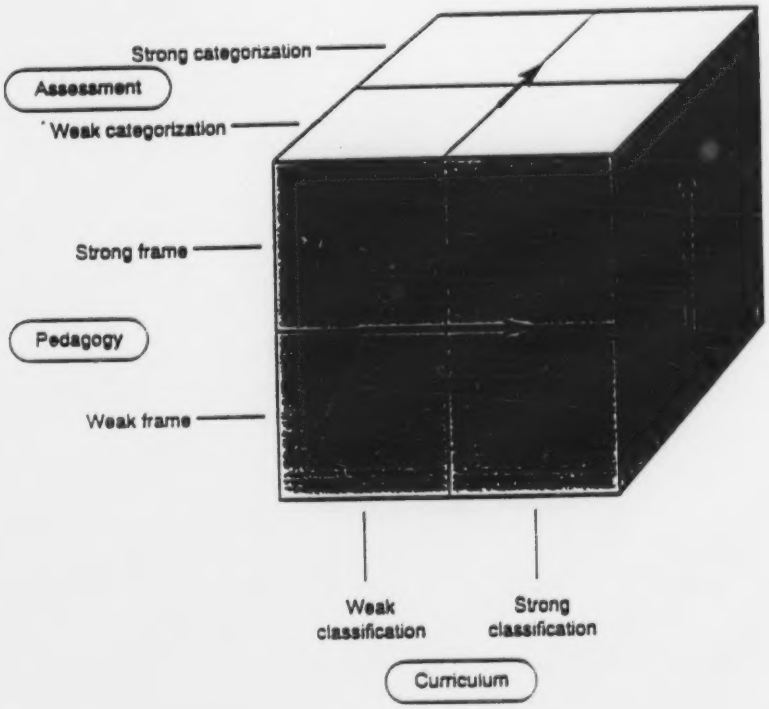

Figure 4: Changing dimensions of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment

This figure represents the increasingly classified subject-based curriculum which we found, the tightening of pedagogic frame and the development of more overt and categoric forms of assessment. It represents the huge changes which have taken place in teachers' work in recent years. However, in contrast, our data from pupils revealed deep continuities in their experiences and perspectives. They remain concerned about having fun, doing interesting things, being active, making friends, achieving success and avoiding trouble - even at the young age of the children in our study. Pupil concerns about schools were much as they have always been.

There are at least two possible reasons for this. First, it is the case that pupils have always had to respond to teacher control in classrooms. Thus, in itself, constraint is not new to pupils - in one sense, it is what being a 'pupil' is all about. Second, and much more significantly in the context of this study, pupils have arguably not experienced change on anything like the scale that teachers have because of the supreme efforts of teachers to protect children from what they have seen as the worst effects of the changes in education policy. Among the illustrations of this are teachers' concern for maintaining positive classroom relationships and teachers' determination to protect the self-esteem of children during assessment procedures.

It is unfortunate, though again not new, that our data showed that such very young pupils seemed not to value highly their work associated with the core curriculum, but this is far from inevitable. Indeed, the development of teachers' subject knowledge could well assist them in providing work which will engage pupils' interests more fully. To the extent that this happens, it will provide illustrative evidence of another main finding of our study, namely that the imposition of the Act's requirements has prompted some positive developments in teachers' professional skills. In this respect one might identify curriculum planning, clarity in aims, the development of a teaching repertoire and of assessment skills. Ironically, as developments continue through the 1990s, these skills may well be used by teachers to pursue their long-standing educational values. They may thus mobilise particular kinds of professional power to resist the coercive requirements of policy-makers. Some have done this already by finding ways to use the procedures they are required to follow for very different ends from those originally intended by Government. Thus procedures rooted in a very different set of educational values have been hijacked by the incorporation of a professional discourse which is still unambiguously rooted in constructivist, rather than established views of knowledge and collegial, rather than competitive, practice.

It has been said that, whilst the major theme of the 1970s was 'equality of opportunity', the major concern of the 1980s was with 'quality' - hence the emphasis on educational performance. However, there were already indications of processes of social differentiation occurring as a result of the National Curriculum and assessment procedures in the classrooms which we studied. At this stage it is too early to be sure of the emerging patterns but these will receive a full analysis as the longitudinal aspect of this study evolves.

6 Conclusion

The picture we are left with at this mid-point of the PACE study is certainly unfinished and is perhaps rather confused. It reveals change and resistance; commitment and demoralization; decreasing autonomy but some developments in professional skills. Is it possible to make any sense out of these apparently contradictory findings?

Certainly there is currently a broad consensus in English primary schools on the structural benefits of having a national curriculum. It is seen as providing for progression and continuity and, with careful design, it is seen as a potential source of coherence. Organisational benefits for teacher training and supply, continuous professional development, curriculum development, parental participation, teacher accountability and national monitoring of educational standards are accepted.

Unfortunately though, the introduction of the National Curriculum into England was seriously compromised because of the ways in which professionally committed teachers were alienated. As our data have shown, the Education Reform Act brought enormous changes for teachers. However, rather than providing a legislative framework through which they could offer and fulfil their professional commitment, the reforms introduced constraint and regulation into almost every area of teachers' work. Yet it seems most unlikely that education standards can rise without the whole-hearted commitment of teachers, working to support pupils' learning.

Having said that, it is also clear that professional commitment has not yet been entirely dissipated. Ironically, collegiality has developed within many schools as a response to the reforms. Unprecedented levels of cooperation are often manifest in schools, between schools and between teacher associations, but these have often been used to defend the quality of the education service against government policies rather than to work in partnership with government towards shared goals.

Our final conclusion then must be one which records, with sadness, the many lost opportunities of this period of change in English primary eduction. The amount of legislative time, of financial resources, of public debate and of teacher energy devoted to the innovations was unprecedented. Yet so much was destructive or wasted because of the ideological clash between the government and teachers.

As AERA meets, the results of Sir Ron Dearing's review of the National Curriculum are awaited. Curriculum 'overload' and assessment 'unmanageability' have been accepted and subject and phase advisory groups have been at work to 'slim down' national requirements. To some extent, this can be seen as an acceptance by the British Government of the central case put by teachers. However, it essentially addresses practicality and work-load issues rather than the educational concerns which have also been raised. There are thus many remaining uncertainties and the struggles surrounding the implementation of the Education Reform Act and its supplementary legislation are not yet over.

NOTE

This paper is an edited version of material to be published in the first book from the PACE project:

Pollard, A., Broadfoot, P., Croll, P., Osborn, M., and Abbott, D. (1994) Changing English Primary Schools? London, Cassell

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